

See Antietam National Battlefield
 WA-II-447 477
 Sharpsburg vicinity, Washington County, MD
 Catocin Center for Regional Studies,
 Frederick Community College
 July 2009

Addendum

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Otto House

The Otto House is a typical example of an antebellum farm house in the mid-Maryland region. Deed research has led to the assumption that the main house was built ca. 1790. It remained in the Otto family into the twentieth century and was eventually sold to the National Park Foundation in 1976. It is now held by the National Park Service, and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. The house is the only remaining building from the nineteenth century Otto farmstead.

John Otto lived on the 60-acre farm at the time of the Civil War. Located near Burnside's Bridge, the house was used as a refuge by Confederate officers and soldiers immediately prior to the Battle of Antietam. When Rodman's command was repelled by A. P. Hill, their line fell back to the Otto farm. As a result, the house and barn were used as a hospital for Union soldiers during and after the battle.

The farm is also significant due to its association with Hilary Watson, one of the leading freedmen of the area after the civil war. As of 1860, John Otto owned two slaves: 27-year-old Watson, who worked with Otto in the fields, and Watson's 54-year-old mother, who probably worked in the house. The pair lived, in his own words, "in the same house the white people did," most likely in a small room above the kitchen. In a 1915 interview, Watson said that Otto paid him for harvest work and for work he did while hired out to other farmers.

During the Battle of Antietam in September 1862, the farm was first occupied by Confederate soldiers, then Union, and then converted into a temporary hospital after the battle. The Otto family left the farm before the battle started, but Watson stayed to look after the place. He later recalled his encounter with a Confederate soldier:

On Tuesday all the Otto family left and went down country for safety. I stayed on the place. Once I fastened up the house tight and walked up in the field. By and by I had a feelin' that I'd better go back, and I went. I found some one had broke a pane of glass in a window and reached in and took out the nail that kept the sash down. Then he'd raised the window and crawled in. Close by, inside of the room, was a washbench, and he'd set

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a crock of preserves and a crock of flour on it ready to carry away. I took the things and put 'em where they belonged and started on the trail of the thief. It was easy follerin' him, for he left all the doors open which he went through. In the dining-room he'd poured a lot of sugar on a handkercher to take along, and he'd gone into my old boss's room and strewed his papers around over the floor. Next he'd gone upstairs, and I went up 'em, too, and hyar he was in a little pantry. He was a Rebel soldier – a young feller – and not very large. I was skeered, but he was mo' skeered than I was – certainly he was; and I said, "You dirty houn' you, I have a notion to take you and throw you down those steps."

Oh! I could have mashed him, for I saw he had no revolver. He did n't say anything. He left. I reckon I was too big for him.¹

May 1864 saw the first military draft for African Americans in Washington County. Watson, then 32 years old, was drafted, but then exempted after Otto paid the \$300 commutation fee. Years later, a writer researching stories about Civil War sites interviewed Watson, who was still living in Sharpsburg. Watson told the writer "when I was drafted to be a soldier, my boss said, 'Do you want to go?' and I told him, 'No, sir.' So me'n'him went to Frederick and he paid three hundred dollars to keep me out of the army."² No doubt it was a little more complicated than this. Otto must have been reluctant to lose a farm hand during the war, but according to both Watson and the Otto family history, Watson was close to the Otto family.

After his November 1864 emancipation, Watson continued to work on the Otto farm; the 1870 census records him working there as a farm laborer with his wife, Christina, and Adeline Turner, 104 years old.³ In 1872, he purchased a lot on High Street in Sharpsburg, where he built a log house for himself and his wife, Christina. Watson was one of the leading members of Sharpsburg's African-American community. He was instrumental in the building of Tolson's Chapel in 1866, and served as a trustee for several years after its construction. And in 1899, the

¹ Clifton Johnson, *Battleground Adventures: The Stories of Dwellers on the Scenes of Conflict in Some of the Most Notable Battles of the Civil War* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), 106.

² Ibid, 105.

³ *United States Federal Census Records*: 1870, District 1, Washington County, Maryland.

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county school board built an African American school (to replace the one that had been meeting in Tolson's Chapel since 1868) next door to Watson's house, where his granddaughter taught. In 1910, he was working as a broom-maker and living with Christina in Sharpsburg.⁴ Watson died on September 20, 1917, at the age of 85, and is buried in the graveyard of Tolson's Chapel.

⁴ *United States Federal Census Records*: 1910, Sharpsburg, Washington County, Maryland.

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Otto Farm, no. MD-943-A; Historic American Building Survey <
<http://memory.loc.gov/pnp/habshaer/md/md1200/md1269/data/md1269.pdf>>.

Edith B. Wallace, "Reclaiming Forgotten History: Preserving Rural African-American Resources in Washington County, Maryland" (master's thesis, Goucher College, 2003), 37, 62-63, 83, 90, 91, 139.



WA-II-354

WA-II-477

Antietam Battlefield, Washington co, MD

Paula Reed

6/09

MDSTHP

Otto Farm House

S.view, front elevation

1/3



WA-II-354

WA-II-477

Antietam Battlefield, Washington Co, MD

Paula Reed

6/09

MDSHPO

Otto Farm House

Rear facade, N. view

2/3



WA-II-354

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Antietam Battlefield, Washington Co, MD

Paula Reed

w/09

MDSHRC

Otto Farmhouse

NW view

3/3

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

WA-II-354
District 1
Map 76
Parcel 157
MAGI # 2209161404

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Otto House

AND/OR COMMON

Possible Log House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Burnside Bridge Road

CITY, TOWN

Sharpsburg

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

6

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Washington

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☒ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC
☐ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
☐ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☒ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ COMMERCIAL
☐ EDUCATIONAL
☐ ENTERTAINMENT
☐ GOVERNMENT
☐ INDUSTRIAL
☐ MILITARY
☐ MUSEUM
☒ PARK
☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

National Park Foundation

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

U.S.A. National Park Service, Dept. of the Interior

CITY, TOWN

Washington

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

D. C.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Washington County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

West Washington Street

CITY, TOWN

Hagerstown

STATE

Maryland 21740

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION**CONDITION**

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED $\leq 50\%$

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This house, a large two story, eight bay structure has recently been acquired for the National Park Service. It would appear to be a log structure which has been sheathed with asbestos shingle siding. All major windows have six over six pane double hung sashes.

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This house is most notably associated with the Civil War Battle of Antietam where it was located near the fighting which occurred at Burnside's Bridge. The house shows general form and proportions which are often associated with the second quarter of the 19th century.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATAACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.15 acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Paula Stoner, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Preservation Associates

DATE

June 1978

STREET & NUMBER

109 West Main Street, Box 202

TELEPHONE

301-432-5466

CITY OR TOWN

Sharpsburg

STATE

Maryland 21782

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

600 000 FEET

(MD)

WA-II-354

27°30"

4370

5602 IV NE
(SHEPHERDSTOWN)

Sharpsburg

(BM 413)

Hawkins
Monument

ANTIETAM NATIONAL
CEMETERY

Burnside
Bridge

Gaging
Site

Keedysville
quad

CREEK

Porterstown
Bridge

Porterstown

Flickersville

McClellan
Lookout

Tower

Red Hill

Eakles Mills

Antietam

Gem
Mt Briar

WA-II-335

WA-II-163

WA-II-350

WA-II-351

WA-II-331

WA-II-324

WA-II-323

WA-II-340

WA-II-33

WA-II-364

WA-II-114

WA-II-363

WA-II-369

WA-II-366

WA-II-342

WA-II-343

WA-II-265

WA-II-344

WA-II-267

WA-II-329

WA-II-317

WA-II-310

WA-II-310

WA-II-362

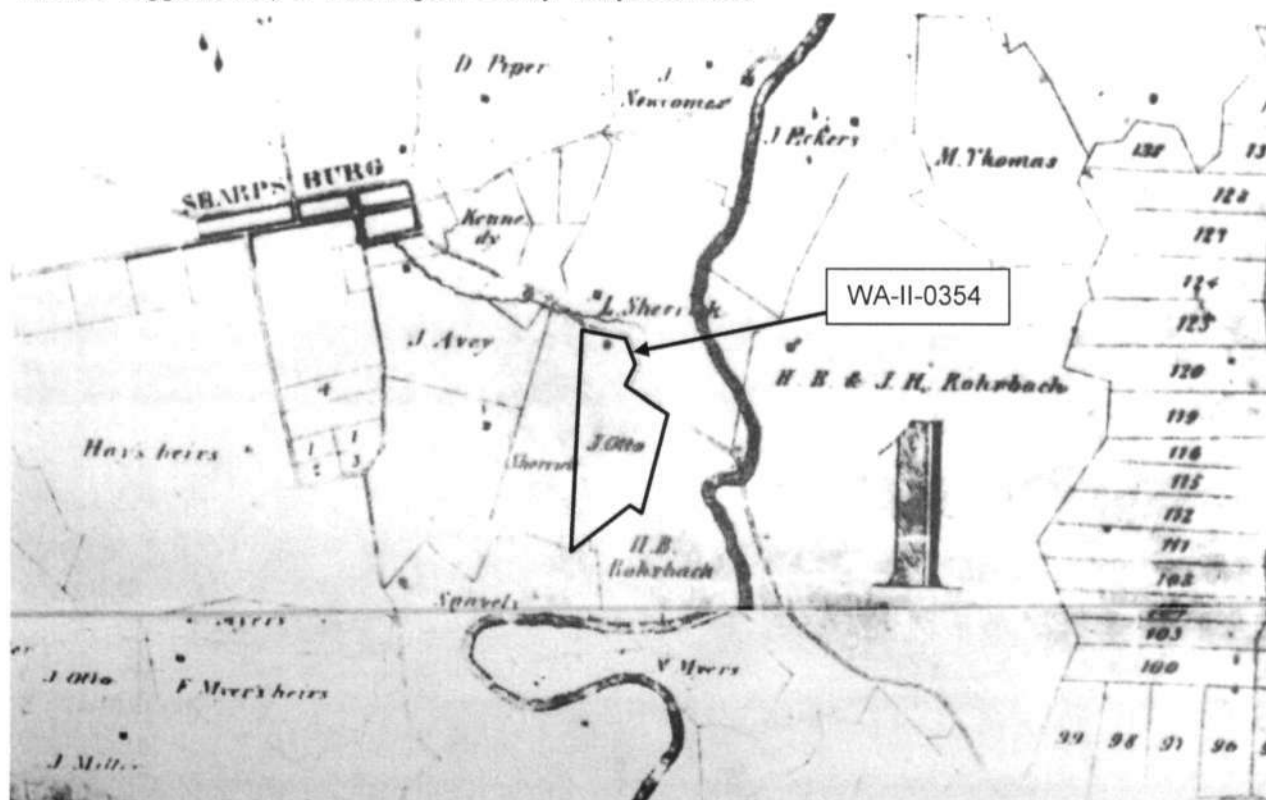
WA-II-362

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WA-II-362

WA-II-0354
 Otto Farm
 18125 Old Burnside Bridge Road, Sharpsburg
 Thomas Taggart's Map of Washington County, Maryland, 1859



Lake, Griffing & Stevenson Atlas, 1877





WA-II-354

N.W.

April, 1976

Possible Log House

Burnside Bridge Road
Sharpsburg

PAULA STONER DICKEY
CONSULTANT, WASHINGTON CO.
HISTORICAL SITES SURVEY